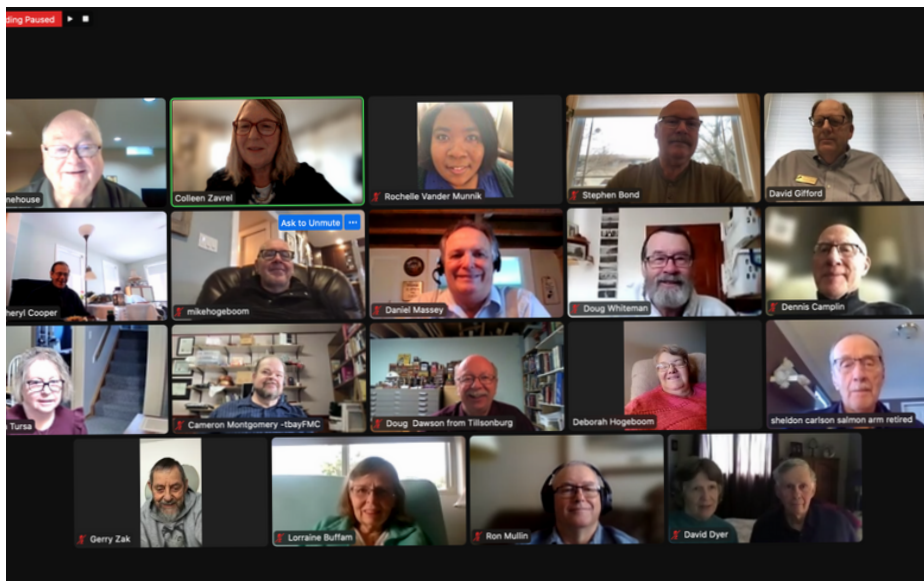




# NEWSLETTER



Attendees at one of the January 2023 Virtual Video Gatherings!

The Free Methodist Church in Canada, and its pre-retirees, along with its retired ministers and spouses, share a desire to more effectively connect-each learning from, sharing with and encouraging the other. For its part, the denomination has established the Retired Ministers Team (RMT) with a mandate to:

1. Holistically care for our retirees as well as offer support to ministers and spouses within ten years of being eligible to retire;
2. Encourage and facilitate the continuing productive service of our retirees ; and
3. Advocate for and support pastors and spouses going through the retirement process.

## GREETINGS

The Retired Ministers Team would like to bring greetings to you via this newsletter. We hope you will find it to be inspirational, informative, and helpful in feeling connected.

Staying connected is one of the main themes that retirees are telling RMT they're looking for.

**Join Us for Lunch & Learn  
Virtual Video Gatherings on  
Thursdays from  
January 11th - February 1st,  
12:30 -1:00pm ET**

January 11th- TBA  
 January 18th- TBA  
 January 25th- TBA  
 February 1st- TBA  
 The Zoom link will be sent out by email by January 4th.

## **Pastoral Transitioning Without Congregational Decline (An Account of Chapel Ridge's Pastoral Transition Process)**

By Pastors Ken Roth and Luke Haggett

### **From Ken's Perspective:**

After serving Chapel Ridge FMC as its lead pastor for eight years, I introduced to the church board the idea of preparing for a pastoral transition in a few years (this was 5 years before it was completed). I explained that by doing this they could potentially avoid the large decline in attendance and vitality that they had experienced after Tony Hedrick had left a few years before and that many other FM churches had experienced (eg. Trulls Rd, Arlington Woods, Polson Park, etc). I explained that, while I was not committed to retiring at 65 (I was 63 years of age at the time), it was time to be thinking and planning for when I did retire. They were very much interested in being proactive about this and so the planning began.

Together, we reasoned that if we could bring an associate pastor on staff that had the potential of becoming the lead pastor, we could "test fly" him, and he us. We were fortunate to be in the position where we needed and could afford a full-time associate. We had had part-time staff to help with our youth, and so that was to be an important part of his ministry description when brought on staff. However, he would also help with other areas of ministry, like preach once a month and attend Board meetings so that he would learn how to be a "generalist", as lead pastors have to be. When we interviewed for this position, we made it clear that at some point in the future, I would be stepping down as lead pastor and the associate would be seriously considered for the lead pastor position, but it would not be a guaranteed thing. He would need to submit his name to the search committee and be considered along with others that might apply.

Though, as lead pastor, I was free to choose that new staff person myself, I felt it was important that the Board appoint a search committee to help me make this choice, since there was a good likelihood that this person would become their next lead pastor. After a number of interviews, together we recommended someone to the Board and they, with congregational input, hired him to be our associate pastor. However, within a few months, it was obvious that this was not a good match and so it was mutually agreed that he would find another church.

Then we had to start the search process all over again. At this point I was 65 years of age, but because I felt that this transition needed to be done well, I chose to stay on as lead pastor until the church had found a replacement and a good transition had transpired. One of the understandings in this transition process was that I would continue to attend Chapel Ridge, even after the new lead pastor was appointed, and possibly stay on staff as his associate, if the new lead and the board were comfortable with this. The idea behind this was to help the new, young lead and congregation weather the changes of personality, gifting, style and vision this would entail.

Luke Haggett was hired in 2013, at the age of 29 years, and served as associate pastor for 3 years and then the church in April of 2016, after considering other possibilities, asked the Conference to appoint him as their new lead pastor. To allow for the transition Chapel Ridge, Luke and I agreed to MEGaP's requirement that I should step away from attending Chapel Ridge for 3 months. However, at the same time they asked me to continue on staff as part-time associate pastor so that Luke would not have to do the work of two pastors all of a sudden and also to help make for a smooth transition.

With this arrangement combined with a young, and very capable pastor, leading a healthy church we did not decline, but grew from about an average attendance of 100 to 250 today. He was also able to lead it in its desire to expand its facilities. We lost very few families during that transition and many new, young families have been assimilated into the life of the church.

**Pastoral Transitioning cont'd**

The policy and practice of the FMCIC has been one of discouraging any input from the outgoing lead pastor in the selection of a new pastor. The thinking behind this seems to be to protect the church from the outgoing pastor "meddling". This can be counterproductive in that it eliminates the wisdom and goodwill of an outgoing pastor from the selection and transition process. While it may not be viable in every situation, when there is a pastor transitioning out, especially if he/she is retiring, this process should be considered as a means of eliminating the attrition caused by a transition. One of the advantages that Chapel Ridge had, making this process possible, was that it was at the place where it could hire an associate pastor to test fly. Nevertheless, I believe there are other ways that such a vetting and transitioning could take place. We believe that there are pastors who are willing to make sacrifices to see the church they are leaving succeed. One of the ways we can facilitate this desire is to make healthy transitions one of our values. If we teach, coach and celebrate this, pastors and congregations will want to rise to the place of doing this well. It is our recommendation that the Conference partner with the outgoing pastor and congregation in developing a transition process that will minimize congregational fallout during the transition. We have been focusing on planting new churches, which needs to be done, but we should also be helping pastors and churches transition well so that we don't lose what we have.

**From Luke's Perspective:**

I came to Chapel Ridge in April of 2013 as an associate pastor. Ken made me aware that he wanted to help me grow as a pastor, and that potentially one day I could take over leadership of the church. Nothing was ever promised. Even up to the day Ken formally told the board he was stepping down, nothing was ever a guarantee. In 2016 I entered the process of discerning if the Lord wanted me to be the next lead pastor of Chapel Ridge with one clear understanding, I loved the mission and vision of the church. Ken had helped build a community I was eager to be a part of. I told the Pastoral Leadership Task Force (PLTF) to choose the right person for the job, even if that person was not me. They didn't have to worry that if they didn't select me I was heading out the door. If I was chosen, I would be happy, albeit nervous and excited, to face the challenge. If I wasn't chosen, my love for the church meant I was happy to stay as an associate.

As things progressed Ken asked me if I was comfortable with him staying on as my associate, if I was to take the lead role. He left this entirely up to me and even left the door open to the fact that if for some reason it wasn't working he would step away without issue. I laughed at the thought of him as my "associate" because I still had, and still do, have so much to learn. I was very comfortable with this arrangement and relished the opportunity to continue to serve alongside him. Long before Ken ever asked me this question he had already given me the reason to say yes to his request. I distinctly remember after a staff meeting one time where Ken pulled me aside. Keep in mind I am still an associate at this point, but he said to me "Luke if we differ in staff meeting on an idea or direction for where to go with a ministry, I want you to know I am going to pull back and just support your idea." This spoke the world to me. It meant that he believed in me, trusted me. It meant he was humble. It meant he was willing to support me even when he had ideas of his own. This conversation paved the way for me to wholeheartedly embrace this process. I knew that with this kind of humility and good will, together we could tackle any relational obstacle that could arise.

# In-Person Gatherings

A gathering was held at Arlington Beach Camp on July 15, 2023 with 5 in attendance. Lorie Buffam hosted as they shared fellowship over lunch and connected in discussion of the book, “An Uncommon Guide to Retirement.”



A gathering was held at Maple Grove Camp on July 15, 2023 with 7 in attendance.

Warm fellowship was shared over lunch before discussion of the remaining 6 chapters of the book, “ An Uncommon Guide to Retirement”.



A gathering was held in Montreal on March 11, 2023 with 14 in attendance. Warm fellowship was shared with discussion of the first 4 chapters of the book, “ An Uncommon Guide to Retirement” with a delicious lunch served at noon

## Pastoral Transitioning cont’d

Having a retired minister in your congregation is sometimes spoken of like a dirty thing. The story goes that they’ll be grumpy, judgemental, outdated and just plain difficult. I believe this to be an unjust characterization that probably was based on a few bad experiences from which an entire narrative was extrapolated. In my own experience, having a retired minister in my congregation has been an asset of immeasurable value. I have leaned on Ken for his experience, for preaching support and for pastoral care support. However, the biggest thing I treasure, is that I feel secure knowing he is holding me up in prayer.

I am grateful that this transition has been part of my story of pastoral ministry, and I pray it can be a story that is not just shared with others, but experienced.



Pastor Luke Haggett making a presentation to Pastor Ken Roth and his wife Linda at their “retirement “ party

**We welcome:**  
 feedback, suggestions,  
 submissions, and  
 conversation via email at  
[rmt@fmcic.ca](mailto:rmt@fmcic.ca).

# TEN REASONS WHY GRIEVING PEOPLE WILL LIKE YOU

By Cameron Taylor

Cameron presented to the RMT at a Webinar entitled 'Grief' on October 16th.

He is following up with this article. Stay tuned for a Webinar Part 2!



When you are called upon to support someone who is impacted by a loss, the last thing you want is to make things worse for that person. In this article, I want to help ensure you are the kind of person people want in their lives during their grief journey. I've been in both situations — sitting with a grieving person and receiving support while in my own grief. I've experienced the desire to run away from the person who is blocking empathy from happening while being nurtured by a skilled grief companion. Here are some reasons I've discovered will make a grieving person like to be around you:

**1. They feel safe and comfortable when they're around you.** You feel safe with someone who makes you feel like they care about your interests – not just their own. You feel safe when you feel love and empathy. You feel safe when there is kindness and gentleness coming from the other person. You feel safe when the person comes with a peaceful and calm presence.

**2. They know you're not afraid to hear them talk about their loss.** Not everyone is comfortable talking about death, a traumatic event, or a hurtful experience. A grieving person wants to talk about their loss. I know I did. I always appreciated it when the person supporting me let me tell my story and didn't feel the need to change the subject or squirm.

**3. They trust that you won't go telling their story to others.** Safety rises when confidentiality is present in a relationship. If you want to close the door on a relationship, tell someone's personal story to a third person without permission from the story teller. It breaks trust and shuts down safety.

**4. They feel no judgment for what they say or feel.** One of the times where judgment can take place is with the emotion of anger. People get angry when they've lost something or someone dear to them. Angry at others, angry at God, angry at themselves. It's normal to be angry after a loss. To judge any emotion as wrong shuts the door to your support.

**5. They feel the warmth of your unconditional love and acceptance.** Love warms hearts and increases the flow of healing and help. When people feel loved and accepted, they tell their story and are allowed the space to feel and be held.

**6. They don't hear pat answers or tired cliches.** More than once I've walked away from well meaning people who were too quick with their words, easy answers or worn out cliches. Sometimes saying nothing is what's needed or maybe it's time to learn some new phrases that will work.

**7. They experience empathy not sympathy.** Brene Brown suggests that if sympathy and empathy were people, empathy would stand close while sympathy would stand far away. Empathy connects and leans in. Sympathy is distant, distracted and detached emotionally.

**8. They appreciate the time you are giving them.** Time is a valuable asset. When we spend it with others who are hurting, it shows we care and has an impact in a positive way. If you are begrudgingly spending time with the person out of duty it doesn't support a healthy empathetic relationship.

**9. They know you are OK with silence.** To be comfortable with silence is a gift we give to those grieving. We don't have to say much to show people that we care and are with them on their journey. As the Arabian Proverb states, "The tree of silence bears the fruit of peace."

**10. They know you are in it for the long haul.** Supporting people in grief is often a marathon not a sprint. The grieving person appreciates knowing they have people who will be there for the long haul and after the initial attention is gone. Grief doesn't end quickly so neither should support.

**Final Words-** The day will come, if it hasn't already, when you will need caring people to sit with you in your grief. People you like being with. As you learn to be that person for others, you are sowing the seed to receive what you in fact have planted in the lives of others.

## DYING WELL

by Matthew McEwen

"Best of all, God is with us." These were the final words of John Wesley before he entered into glory. For Wesley, dying well meant living well. In his library that he offered his lay ministers was a copy of Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying. Thinking about mortality is not a comfortable subject, but Taylor did not avoid it. "When we come to die indeed, we shall be put to it to stand firm upon the two feet of a Christian: faith and patience." Psalm 90:12 tells us to number our days to gain a heart of wisdom, and so Taylor writes, "God has given us a short time on earth, yet on this short time eternity depends." Not surprising, John Wesley faced death throughout his ministry. In his journal (May 26, 1777) he wrote, "Here I found E- R- weaker and happier than ever. Her life seemed spun out to the last thread. I spent half an hour with her, to teach her, at once, and learn of her, to die."

There's also his letter to an unhappy woman where he asks: "Do you never think about [death]? Why do you not? Are you never to die? Nay, it is appointed for all men to die. And what comes after? Only heaven or hell. Will the not thinking of death, put it farther off? No; not a day; not one hour." John Wesley was speaking out of the memento mori tradition (the practice of being mindful of mortality). Like Jeremy Taylor, Wesley would have known John Donne (poet and preacher of the 1600s). In the last year of Donne's life, he preached a final sermon reflecting on his immanent death and encouraging his congregation to be ready for their own death. Of course the key to dying well is living well, and so Donne says, "Our critical day is not the very day of our death, but the whole course of our life." Like any good preacher, Donne then pointed to the extraordinary death of Christ. "That God, this Lord, the Lord of Life, could die is a strange contemplation." Furthermore, "To us that speak daily of the death of Christ, can the memory or



Matthew presented to the RMT at a Webinar entitled 'Dying Well' on November 2nd. He is following up with this article. Stay tuned for a his upcoming course on this topic.

mention of our own death be irksome or bitter?" Where he ended that message was a simple appeal: "There we leave you in that blessed dependency, hang upon Him that hangs upon the cross, Till he grants you a resurrection, and an ascension into that kingdom which He hath prepared for you with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood. Amen."

I have been blessed through the generosity of the Lorne Park Foundation and the support of the good people of Holt FMC to have been able to continue my education. I recently completed training in Tyndale's new thanatology program, and out of those studies I presented a research project to SCOD. Again through the support of the Lorne Park Foundation, this project is becoming a reality. To address the rise in MAID (medical assistance in dying) I am developing a 6-week small group curriculum on dying well. Sessions will address medical considerations, financial, spiritual, and last wishes (funeral). Also in this series is the importance of narrative (let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story, Psalm 107:2). Allowing someone to share their life story restores a sense of identity for the dying and can provide comfort. This small group curriculum includes interviews with experts (such as a palliative physician) and a participant guide for reflection and response. I ask that you would please remember this work in your prayers as we hope to bring it to completion in 2024. Live well, and finish well. 2nd Tim. 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness."

## "GOD HAS ORDAINED ALL OUR DAYS"

by Brenda Tursa

(Brenda served alongside her husband Reverend Peter Tursa in various FMCiC churches)

There are times in our lives when each of us may wonder what is happening, and what the outcome will be. Throughout the years I have had many such times and find that, after my human thoughts take opportunity to ponder and analyse, I come back to one basic truth and all-encompassing comfort, "My times are in His hands". God is with me and intends all for my good. God knows all about everything and therefore knows all about us and what has happened in our lives to this point. He knows the motives of the heart. He knows the truth. He knows the path He has for us.

We may feel perplexed at times with many difficulties. One solace I have found over the years is that many difficulties come our way at once, so that we cannot dwell upon one particular thing. What would seem to be an overwhelming situation to think about is tempered by something else needling away at the back of my mind. Problems do not always come in single file. Also, as has so often been pointed out, most problems do pass. Our mandate is to go through the centre of them, knowing that we can lean on God and that He will help us, however difficult they may be.

I recall being at a summer camp some years ago when there were a number of days that were sweltering hot. I do not take the heat well and found this to be very difficult. It was hard to believe that it would ever be cool again. However, in the month of January I attended a meeting at the same camp when the weather was extremely cold, with high winds and snow. How could two such opposing forces encompass the same place? Obviously, because of the climate in which we live, we experience summer and winter, hot and cold.

So in our lives we can experience great fluctuation in experience and emotion. Yet who knows whether we have come to the kingdom for such a time as this, as was Esther's experience. (Esther 4:14)

We go through many seasons in life. Some, such as these retirement years, can be difficult with many adjustments and, as much as we fight against these changes and losses, some things cannot be avoided. Even so, these retirement years can be a blessing. As time goes on, I am realizing how quickly life passes and that life on earth is just a season. I am comfortable with that and I realize the importance of each day and each year. It is good to be reminded of this, as it is so easy to waste time on negative thoughts and on things that cannot be changed because they are outside of our control. Time could be so much better spent on more positive things. We often find ourselves looking to the future, to the next event, perhaps even waiting for today to pass. It is so important to enjoy the time we have now with one another. If a spark comes within us to call someone, then call; to visit, then visit; to write, then write; to pray, then pray. Time passes so quickly and the clock that is wound once (each person's life) will come to an earthly end. In Psalm 139:16 (NKJV) we read, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in your book they all were written. The days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." I have come realize that I am at a place where, for many aspects of life there are no nexts, no next times. I will never again be a teenager or a young wife and mother, or partake in certain sports. The list could go on. I am comfortable with that, but it causes me deep thought to realize how life has gone by and the time I have left on this earth is known only to God. Thanks be to God that in every circumstance I can believe, like Esther, that I will be here "for such a time as this". Thanks be to God that His strength will uphold me in whatever situation I face. Thanks be to God that He is in control. Our times are in His hands; the very best place to be.



**Reverend Dr. Neale Robb**  
**1956 – May 16, 2023**

Rev. Dr. Neale Robb from Smithville, Ontario passed away after suffering a massive heart attack. Rev. Neale was ordained a deacon in 1980 and became an ordained minister in 1983. He pastored in Ontario at St. Joseph Island, Sudbury, Valley View, Simcoe and Caistor Centre. From 2000 until his retirement in 2020, he was a teacher at the Smithville District Christian High School. Most recently, in his retirement he has been serving as Interim Pastor at Dunnville FMC. Neale's mark was made in many communities as he served as a 4th generation minister.



**Rev. Donald Emerson Hodgson**  
**February 6, 1942-**  
**July 6, 2023.**

Rev. Hodgins was a retired minister, who pastored at Kingsview FMC and at Harrowsmith FMC. Additionally, he served as the Director of Conference Ministries, as well as being the District Assistant Superintendent for the Quebec region. In the 1990's, he transferred to the Wesleyan Church of Canada and was elected as a District Superintendent, a role he performed until his retirement in 2013. Rev. Hodgins' wife, Diana, and his 3 daughters – Krista, Sharon and Andrea survive him.



**Rev. David Dyer**  
**September 23, 1937-**  
**June 11, 2023**

Peacefully at his home in his 86th year in Napanee surrounded by family on Sunday June 11, 2023. David Dyer dear husband of Charlotte and loving father of John (Annette) and Valerie (Stephen). Brother of Frank, Stanley (Margaret) and Paul. Predeceased by his wife Caroll (1995). David pastored various Free Methodist Churches in Ontario in his years of ministry:  
 Barrie (Assistant Pastor) 1959-60  
 Richmond Hill 1966-74  
 Trulls Road 1974-80  
 Cobourg 1980-86  
 Perth 1986-93  
 Westdale Park 1993-00  
 Yarker 2000-07 (officially retired in October 2002, but continued to pastor at Yarker until the end of 2007)  
 David was a tremendous support to retired pastors and we are grateful for his contribution to this initiative.



**Pierre-Andre Jean-Charlest**  
**April 23, 1945-**  
**October 7, 2023**

It is with great sadness that we announce the sad news of the death of Pastor Pierre-André Jean-Charles after a long illness courageously endured. He was Assistant Pastor of the Free Methodist Church of Rosemont and administrator of the Free Methodist Church of Quebec. All our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved family.





**Ann Zak (wife of Rev. Gerry Zak)**  
**March 18, 1944 –**  
**September 30, 2023**

Ann (nee Shaventoski), was born in Morden, Man. She grew up at nearby Darlingford. In 1966 she graduated from the three-year theology course at Central Pentecostal College in Saskatoon. In 1967 she graduated with a CNA certificate from St. Boniface School of Nursing in Winnipeg. She worked as a CNA nurse in North Battleford, Hay River, Winnipeg, and Red Lake, Ont. In 1979 she married Gerry Zak and lived at Shell Lake till they moved to nearby Spiritwood, where they lived till the time of her passing. She accepted Christ as her Saviour in her youth and her Christian life and service was the most important part of her life. Always faithful in church attendance, she was active in playing the piano, teaching in Sunday School, participating in ladies' groups, and went on two mission trips- to Brazil and Thailand.



**Rev. Keith Taylor**  
**February 13, 1931-**  
**October 11, 2023.**

Rev. Keith was a FMCiC retired minister, who was ordained a deacon in 1959 and an elder in 1961. He held appointments at Brandon & Rapid City, Weyburn & Riverview, Roblin FMC, and the Broadview Indian Mission. He also held the position of Superintendent of Buildings/Grounds at Aldersgate College, and was Assistant to the Superintendent of the Manitoba District before retiring in the 1990's.

Rev. Keith is also the father of Rev. Cam Taylor, Marilou Mowchenko (wife of Rev. Jay Mowchenko at Briercrest College), and Beth Rawn (MEGaP member). Please keep Keith's widow, Joan, their children and the rest of the family in your prayers.



**Ellen  
 Jespersen  
 De Mille**  
**January  
 30, 1932 –**  
**November  
 10, 2023**

Ellen was born in Seattle, Washington. She spent her senior high school years in Jamaica where her sister was a missionary, in Bible school at Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta, and Seattle Pacific College where she graduated with a degree in music education. It was at Seattle Pacific College where Ellen met Clarke De Mille, the son of Free Methodist missionaries from southern Africa. After a few dates, Clarke left for southern Africa. Clarke and Ellen corresponded for a year and a half leading to a marriage proposal, resulting in Ellen's journeying by ship to Durban, South Africa and their subsequent marriage in Germiston, South Africa on December 13, 1958.

Lundi Mission in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe was their home for 20 years where they ministered as educators. Ellen was loved and appreciated by her students, fellow missionaries, and the Lundi Mission community. Their family grew to include three daughters, Joy, Elizabeth, and Margaret. Upon retirement in Abbotsford, BC, Ellen continued in the music ministry of their home church, Holy Cross, up until close to a month before her death.

Ellen is lovingly survived by her husband, Clarke, her daughters, Joy, Beth, and Margi, and her two grandsons, Martin and William.